Distance, Paging, Infrastructure Provider Category-ll, Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT). The Universal Service Support Policy, on the recommendations of TRAI, as accepted by the Government, has taken effect from 01.04.2002. Guidelines in this regard have also been issued.

(a) The amount set aside as Universal Service levy have been credited to the Consolidated Fund of India.

(b) An amount of Rs. 1273.73 Crores set aside towards Universal Service Fund (USF) till 28th February, 2003, has ben credited to the Consolidated Fund of India. The guidelines referred to in reply to part (a) of the question govern the deployment and utilization of the USF. The budgetary provision of Rs. 300 Crores allocated for 2002-03 has been utilized for supporting operational expenditure for existing Village Public Telephones (VPTs). Some payments have also been made in respect of the VPTs which have replaced the Multi Access Radio Relay VPTs.

Electricity operated telephones

†2958. SHRI MUNAVVAR HASAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(c) whether it is a fact that only electricity operated telephones are functioning in the rural areas of various States, particularly, in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether telephones remain out of order in the rural areas in certain States due to lack of any alternative arrangement of power whether power is supplied only for four to eight hours in a day while full rental is charged by the department from the subscribers; and

(f) if so, the details of the steps being taken to streamline functioning of electrically operated telephones in such areas?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. Only MARR telephones (Multi Access Rural Radio) and WLL (Wireless in Local Loop) fixed telephones in rural areas are electricity operated.

(a) No, Sir. MARR and WLL-fixed telephones are provided with battery backups to make them functional during prolonged power failure.

(b) Does no arise.

Rebate in rental for rural telephones

†2959. SHRI MUNAVVAR HASAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that rural telephone subscribers have to pay rental etc. at par with urban subscribers on enhancement of capacity of exchanges;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps Government are taking to continue with the rebate extended to rural subscribers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(d) Rebate extended to rural subscribers is still valid.

† Originai notice of the question was received in Hindi.